

of all your correspondents' virtuous indignation over my supposed advocacy of the support of quacks or quack institutions.

None of your correspondents have advanced any arguments or stated any facts to support the contention that it needs the skill and knowledge of a qualified medical man to apply electricity in the great majority of conditions in which it is found useful, such as those I mentioned in my previous note. I should say that to one case which requires the knowledge and skill of a man like Mr. Chisholm Williams there are at least 20 that can be perfectly well treated by a masseur or masseuse who has received the excellent training of the modern teachers of massage and electricity; indeed, I venture to suggest whether it is not somewhat derogatory to the dignity of the profession for a qualified medical man to undertake the routine treatment of such cases.

To correct Mr. Chisholm Williams's and others' misconstructions of my remark about having one's ideas of diagnosis and treatment overhauled by another practitioner I will narrate a case in point. I sent an intractable case of Graves's disease for treatment to a highly qualified medical electrician (who, I believe, charged a guinea for each sitting). Without any thought or intention of breach of faith towards me he rather pooh-poohed the idea of using electricity and, of course, absolutely discouraged the patient, thereby preventing her giving electrical treatment a trial of sufficient duration to convince me of its value or otherwise in her case. Had I sent this patient to a lay electrician acting under my own instructions she would have continued the treatment as long as I thought it worth while. I have no lack of confidence in the good faith of my professional brethren, but I contend that skilled knowledge of a special line of treatment does not put the electric practitioner in possession of all one's reasons for desiring a certain line of treatment in a particular case. I cannot see any analogy between the case of a non-medical but trained person applying electrical treatment when prescribed by a physician and that of a patient being treated by a bone-setter or quack oculist. Finally, I must say that to talk about "covering" in connexion with my letter—if read with ordinary intelligence—appears to me to be rank absurdity.

With regard to the x rays, my experience is limited to their use by qualified medical men. I am glad to learn from Mr. Chisholm Williams that it is possible to get such treatment at a scale of fees within the reach of middle-class patients.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

E. STANLEY SMITH, M.D. Durh., M.R.C.P. Lond.
Wimpole-street, W., Sept. 10th, 1904.

APOCYNUM CANNABINUM.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The editorial note on the Uses of Apocynum Cannabinum in THE LANCET of Sept. 3rd, p. 734, will, I hope, direct the attention of the profession to a remedy which I have found of the greatest value and have constantly prescribed for the last 14 years. The drug was first introduced to my notice by Dr. Joseph Kidd who recommended me to try it in the case of a patient with dilated heart who had passed from his care to mine when she moved into the country. The disease had reached a stage when the patient could no longer rest recumbent, the anasarca and ascites being so advanced that paracentesis appeared to afford the only chance of relief. The "vegetable trocar," however, answered admirably. Within the first two days of its administration the urine rose from about ten ounces in the 24 hours to 60 and the diuresis increased daily until the ascites and the anasarca almost disappeared, the patient getting about again and living for two years. Again and again I have had similar experience and a large number of my colleagues in this district now employ the remedy, having seen such marked benefit from it in cases of cardiac and renal dropsy in which we have consulted.

I have always used "Keith's concentrated tincture" which Dr. Kidd recommended as the only reliable preparation of the drug. Several of my professional brethren who have employed the tincture usually kept by chemists have

¹ Keith's concentrated tincture of apocynum cannabinum may be obtained from Gale and Co., 15, Bouverie-street, London, E.C., and probably from other wholesale druggists.

been disappointed in its effects; and to the want of activity in this, the ordinary, tincture must, I think, be attributed the fact that apocynum cannabinum has not come into more general use. The fluid extract recommended by Dr. J. Pawinski may be equally efficacious with Keith's preparation but of this I have no experience. The irritant action of the drug upon the digestive organs is a positive quality which must be borne in mind. In the first case in which I so successfully employed apocynum the dose recommended by Dr. Kidd, who was, at the time, I believe, supposed to prescribe drugs in decillionths and similar fractions of their ordinary doses, caused violent vomiting and purging and I had at once to reduce it to one-sixth the amount. In cases of cirrhosis of the liver I have found the smallest doses cause dangerous gastric irritation and I always warn the colleagues to whom I recommend the medicine against employing it in cases complicated with liver disease; in these cases I consider that it is contra-indicated. I prescribe the concentrated tincture in doses of from one to two minims every four hours or three times a day, increasing the dose by one minim every two days until the maximum which the stomach and intestines will bear is reached; this is seldom as much as ten minims. The medicine may be combined with other heart tonics. Employed carefully in this way its beneficial effects have, in my own experience and in that of the many friends to whom I have introduced apocynum cannabinum, been astonishing and yet so little is the medicine known that only once, when in consultation I have advised its use, has my colleague been familiar with it and that man immediately said, "I know where you got that from, it was from Kidd."

With the precautions which I have indicated I strongly advise your readers in cases of cardiac and renal dropsy to try this remedy, the merits of which I have long intended to press upon the notice of the profession through the medium of your columns.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

THOMAS JAMES WALKER, M.D. Lond.

Peterborough, Sept. 10th, 1904.

THE UTILITY OR OTHERWISE OF FEVER HOSPITALS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I entirely endorse the view to which Dr. C. K. Millard gives expression in your issue of to-day's date that, should an inquiry take place, the fact of having taken part in this controversy ought to constitute a disqualification for a place on the Commission. I agree, also, with the suggestion that "sanitarians who have been actively instrumental in securing the provision of fever hospitals in the past" should not be placed in the invidious position of having to sit in judgment on their own actions. The fact that many able and conscientious medical officers of health will thus be excluded need not be deplored, seeing that their evidence will be available and will lose none of its weight. Now a word of caution. I cannot help thinking that undue haste would be a great mistake. *Festina lente!* The reasonable demand that an inquiry should be held has been too grudgingly conceded up to the present time to justify the hope that this important question is ripe for settlement on its merits. Let us leave it for a time in the crucible of intra-professional discussion where the truth should be in no danger.

In conclusion, I echo your suggestion, Sirs, that the controversy may well be conducted without personalities in the future. Indeed, there is no room for them. For whatever be the outcome of this inquiry, should it take place, it will not be denied that much good has *already* been accomplished which will be a distinct gain to the cause of public health.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Nottingham, Sept. 10th, 1904.

EDWD. DEAN MARRIOTT.

THE BOILING OF MILK.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—May I, as the "iconoclastic scientist" referred to by Dr. J. M. Fortescue-Brickdale in THE LANCET of Sept. 10th, p. 792, offer a word of explanation with regard to the slight misapprehension he is under as to my views on the boiling of milk. In the course of my conversation with Mr. R. Bevan I did not enter on the very debatable ground included under reasons (2),